

CF Introduces School Resource Officer, Project ALERT

By **CHRISTINA M. HINKE**
Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader*

CRANFORD — The Cranford schools will see a new face in the halls this year, a school resource officer. Detective Matthew Nazzaro was selected as the school resource officer. He will split his time between all the schools in the community during school hours.

"We feel to tie the community together even tighter than we are, that it is important we have this position to solidify that relationship between the police and the kids, the police and the administrators and the schools, the town and the police, the town and the board of ed," Cranford Police Chief James Wozniak told *The Westfield Leader*. "Matt was chosen as a school resource officer because he has great communications skills. He was born and raised in town."

Det. Nazzaro has completed weeks of training, and received a school resource officer certification, and is also up-to-date- on juvenile law, Chief Wozniak said.

"Today's school environment puts additional emphasis on school safety and securing our school buildings. But in Cranford, between the police and the school, we like to partner together so students recognize our police as a friend and as a resource and can go to them in all sorts of situations," Superintendent of Schools Gayle Carrick told *The Leader*.

The objective of the resource officer has a proactive outlook, rather than a reactive one, Det. Nazzaro said. He will be a mentor to the students who can go to him with any issues they may want to discuss. As part of this mentoring approach, he will forego the police uniform, badge and hat, and wear a polo shirt

with the Cranford police logo. He will still be armed, as required for his job as a police officer.

"What we are trying to do is break down a barrier...an approachable person that works for the police department that acts as a mentor and can connect with kids in a positive manner. Sometimes the uniform becomes the barrier," Det. Nazzaro said.

As an example of breaking down barriers between the police and students, Chief Wozniak told of the arrest of a group of kids, one of which was arrested for possession of marijuana. "By the time all the kids went home, one of the kids was in with us and saying, 'I am ruining my life. I have been smoking pot for a year and it's ruining my life. Can you help me?' It poses the question: if we had a school resource officer in place already would this kid have been able to come to our school resource officer and vent the issues....we can't let kids like that fall through the gap...We [school resource officer] are like an early warning system... We are here to help," Chief Wozniak said.

Substance abuse awareness is also one way the police department is partnering with the schools. "Cranford is not immune to the substance abuse issues. Nationwide it is an epidemic, specifically heroin," Det. Nazzaro said. "It's harder to be a kid today. We were not exposed to what kids are today —social media, internal pressures, external pressures, following social norms that may be misguided."

A new substance abuse program, Project ALERT, will replace the D.A.R.E. program, and begin in the sixth grade, with 11, 45-minute classroom sessions, with a booster program in the eighth

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GW Council Discusses Flood Prevention, AFC

By **BRIAN TRUDELLE**
Specially Written for *The Westfield Leader*

GARWOOD — Cranford is working with a new engineering firm to explore widening the Orchard Brook, Garwood Mayor Pat Quattrocchi told the borough council on Tuesday, but Borough Engineer Don Guarriello said he thought any plans probably would need new approval from the state.

Mrs. Quattrocchi's statement, following a meeting with Cranford Mayor Andis Kalnins, also revealed that flooding in the township from storms such as Sandy and Irene in recent years has accelerated efforts to obtain easements from property owners along the waterway.

The issue has been of particular interest recently to Garwood residents, especially on the south side of the borough who saw water approach their homes on Spruce Street twice during thunderstorms this past summer.

At the July 22 council meeting, several residents blamed the nearby Athletic Field Complex, but Mr. Guarriello pointed to an unrealized plan that is more than a decade old to widen the Orchard Brook, which is a continuation of the Garwood Brook after it passes under North Avenue.

The plan was never implemented, Mr. Guarriello said a month ago, because Cranford was unable to obtain the easements from its residents and decided not to pursue eminent domain. Without any widening of the Orchard Brook, Mr. Guarriello said, Garwood is prohibited from enlarging the Garwood Brook culverts along South Avenue and under the NJ Transit rail line, which is what he said caused the flooding on Spruce.

"What Mayor Kalnins indicated to me was originally they had about 15 to 20 holdouts when they were attempting to obtain right-of-ways back a number of

years ago," Mayor Quattrocchi said. "He indicated to me that at this time, they are down to about eight or nine as a result of the flooding that has taken place in Cranford over the past couple of years. One resident actually lost a swimming pool."

A report by the engineers, Maser Consulting, headquartered in Red Bank, will be reviewed by the Cranford Township Council at its next meeting on Monday, September 8, Mayor Quattrocchi said.

Regardless, Mr. Guarriello said he felt any effort to widen the Orchard Brook, which runs from North Avenue to the Rahway River, would require new approval from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

"I have the feeling that [the original] application is going to be dead," Mr. Guarriello said. "And they're going to have to reapply, meeting 2014 standards, not 2000 standards."

Councilman Bill Nierstedt forwarded a resolution for Borough Attorney Bob Renaud to review seeking Cranford's help on resolving the issue, which could be presented publicly at the Garwood Council's next meeting.

The issue was one of only a handful of items discussed at the relatively brief council session.

The council also heard from Athletic Field Complex project committee representative Lou Petruzzelli who said that while all

drywall installation has been completed on the field house, several issues remain at the \$2.3-million recreation site.

Two doors, one interior and one exterior, still have not arrived but are expected by the end of next week.

However, the biggest problems that remain include ponding on the center of the basketball court, which will need to be resurfaced with asphalt to fill in the low area, and a similar water issue in center field of the Little League Baseball field. The cause of that has not been determined and is still being investigated.

Regardless, Mr. Petruzzelli said the issues will delay the opening and prevent Lincoln School students from using the field, which originally was to be ready by May 2013, for any fall sports programs.

Other issues include exterior hand rails, which call for using a material the original subcontractor is not equipped to install. Another contractor will have to be found, Mr. Petruzzelli said.

Additionally, several areas of the complex have not been maintained since most of the recent work has focused on the field house, causing weeds to sprout and other unsightly problems.

"I've said it, probably, for the past several months now, is that the way I want the field and the entire complex handed over to us [is] as if it was just done yesterday," Mr. Petruzzelli said. "So whenever they get their CO (certificate of occupancy), I want it to be perfect: leaves gone, new stone. I want everything working the way it should be."

In another matter, Mr. Guarriello informed the council that the road work on Third Avenue should be complete by the weekend, removing any concerns of traffic disruptions at Lincoln School when classes begin Thursday, September 4.

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